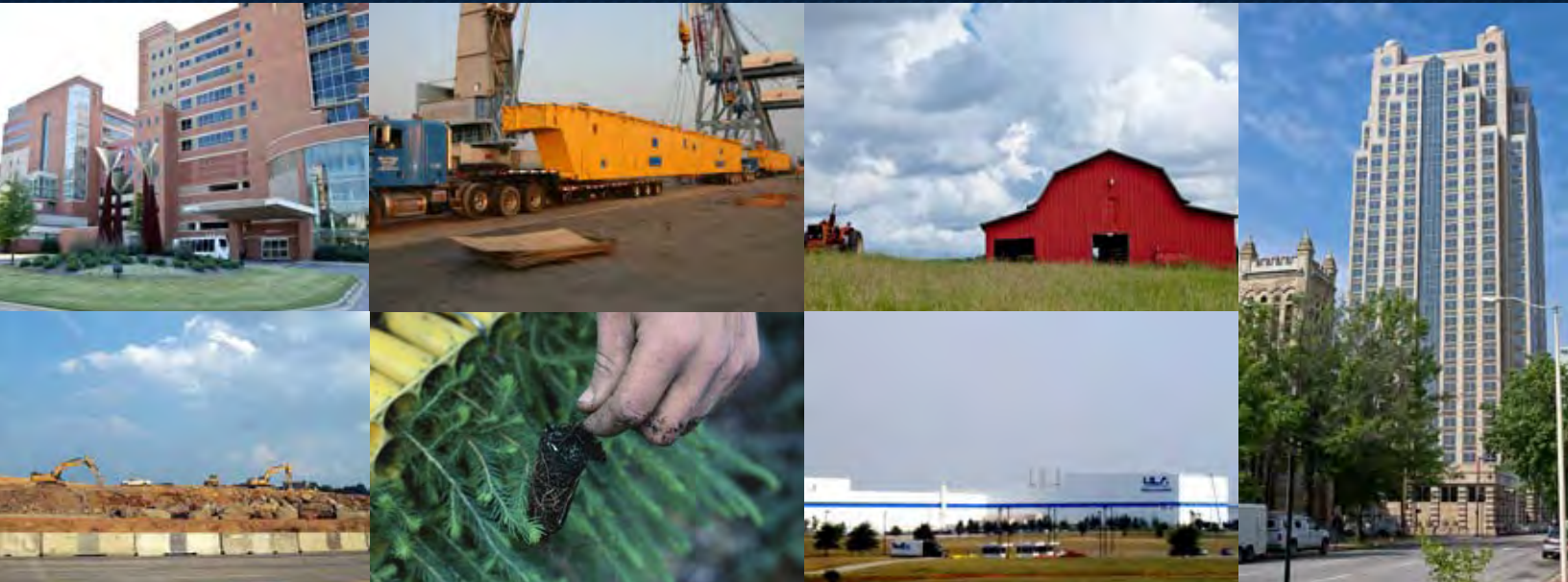


Alabama CEDS

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY



ALABAMA ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS



**THE ALABAMA CONSOLIDATED COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
A PROSPECTUS FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY**

JUNE 2011

Alabama Association of Regional Councils

Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments
West Alabama Regional Commission
Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham
East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission
South Central Alabama Development Commission
Alabama-Tombigbee Regional Commission
Southeast Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission
South Alabama Regional Planning Commission
Central Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission
Lee-Russell Council of Governments
North Central Alabama Regional Council of Governments
Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments

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ALABAMA CEDS

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Introduction

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This report constitutes the Alabama Consolidated Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy of the Alabama Association of Regional Councils and the twelve Regional Councils that serve the communities of the State of Alabama. It is prepared and updated with the assistance of the United States Economic Development Administration in partnership with the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs. The task of coordinating the preparation of this Strategy and the development of this report was performed by the Planning Task Force of the Alabama Association of Regional Councils.

The Consolidated Strategy is a compilation of the efforts of the twelve Regional Councils. It is organized into seven sections which largely reflect the technical requirements for a CEDS as stipulated by the United States Economic Development Administration. These seven sections are:

The Planning Process for a Consolidated Strategy. This section describes the process for engaging state officials along with regional and community leaders in the economic development process;

The Economic Situation of the State and the Regions. This section presents statistical and other information to present an overall picture of the local and regional economy as well as the State economy, particularly in relation to the global economy and the greater Southeast region;



An Analysis of Economic Development Issues and Opportunities. This section includes an analysis of local and regional problems and opportunities;

The Vision of the Regional Councils for Sustainable Economic Prosperity. This section presents a statewide perspective and program for dealing with the identified problems and opportunities as well as looking forward to a broader vision of economic prosperity, environmental vitality and community wellness;

Promoting the Vision for Sustainable Economic Prosperity. This section deals with the capabilities and interests of the Regional Councils and puts forth a strategy of action for addressing the expectations and project priorities;

Strategic Projects and Programs. This section describes the vital project priorities of

the various Regional Councils from the standpoint of a statewide perspective; and

Measuring Sustainable Economic Prosperity. This section describes the methods of the various Regional Councils in measuring their performance in economic development and calls for efforts to develop a system of measuring overall sustainability.

Sustainable Economic Prosperity

Sustainability in economic development serves to advance from the singular notion of creating jobs to a broader spectrum of economic prosperity that recognizes the interrelationships between the economy of the State, the prosperity of all of its people, and the quality of the environment. It recognizes the effect of these interrelationships on the well-being of citizens and their communities, the creation of personal wealth and an overall better quality of life. It recognizes and promotes strategies that spur creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in all parts of the State and provides for the spillover of knowledge and linkages across clusters of business and industry. Sustainable economic development has been described as:

“...the various economic policies and instruments available for ensuring that the economy is able to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the economic system, including its environmental resource base, to meet the needs of future generations.”

The concept of sustainability promotes a more holistic and sustainable approach to:

- Promoting economic prosperity,
- Protecting environmental quality, and
- Serving the people of the State of Alabama.

The Alabama Association of Regional Councils uses the process of developing

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) to recognize the distinct economic assets of functional economic regions so as to more fully realize their respective competitive advantages. In doing this, there are certain guiding principles in the economic development process that have been identified. Among others, these include principles of:

- Global Awareness,
- Regional Competitiveness,
- Community Livability, and
- A Sustainable Future.

The intent of the Planning Task Force in the preparation of this Consolidated Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy goes beyond traditional efforts at cataloging infrastructure projects for economic development into the exploration of a broader array of values, goals and policies that point to a more sustainable economic prosperity.

A Consolidated Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

The purpose of this Strategy is to enhance and expand the support of the Regional Councils for economic development efforts throughout the State. For many years, the twelve Regional Councils of Alabama have been involved in statewide and local economic development activities. Most of them continue to provide support as Economic Development Districts of the United States Economic Development Administration. In this capacity, those Regional Councils who serve as Economic Development Districts each prepare a regularly updated Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for their respective district or region.

A “*regional*” Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy acts as a guide for economic development for a multi-county region. The preparation of a CEDS is regulated by Section 302 of the Public Works

and Economic Development Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. § 3162) and by Federal regulations (13 C.F.R. part 303). Economic Development Districts, or EDD's, use a CEDS as an opportunity to delineate public and private goals for economic development and unify them into a single "road map" of strategies. The strategies are devised based on an analysis of the regional economy, the identified goals and priorities, and the actions required to achieve those goals and priorities. An effective CEDS should be the result of continuous planning and the participation of a diverse group of public and private interests.

This "Consolidated" Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy is statewide in its perspective. It does not enjoy the official status of a regional CEDS that is prepared by an EDD. It is, nevertheless, informed by the efforts of the Regional Councils throughout the State of Alabama, whether or not they actually serve as an EDD. This Consolidated Strategy serves:

1. to bring together and "consolidate" the regional strategies from the various Regional Councils into a statewide strategy;
2. to provide a statewide perspective back to the Regional Councils to provide guidance in the preparation and implementation of their respective regional strategies; and
3. to provide a statement of intent of the Regional Councils as a group to other state-wide and local organizations and agencies with regard to the significance and importance of maintaining a vision and strategy for economic development that incorporates principles of sustainability.

Previous Efforts at a Consolidated Strategy

Periodically, the Alabama Association of Regional Councils undertakes to consolidate the economic development planning efforts of

the twelve Regional Councils into a single effort with a statewide perspective. In addition to the 2010 effort, a previous effort was performed in 2006 and 2007.

The Alabama Consolidated Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy of 2007

The Alabama Association of Regional Councils entered into an agreement with the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) in 2006 to prepare and submit to ADECA a "consolidated" CEDS representing a statewide summation of the economic development programs contained and described in the CEDS of each of the twelve regions throughout the State. The agreement also called for supplementary reports detailing the extent and nature of information available at the twelve Regional Councils regarding specified topics and for consultation to ADECA on a continuing basis through the life of the agreement. This agreement was conceived in support of ADECA's Statewide Economic Recovery Strategy following Hurricane Katrina.

The Consolidated Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy of 2007 was a compilation of the efforts of the twelve Regional Councils. It was prepared by reviewing the contents of the twelve Regional CEDS and summarizing them into a single document while emphasizing the focus, mission and strategy of the individual efforts. It was organized to reflect the technical requirements for a CEDS as stipulated by the United States Economic Development Administration.

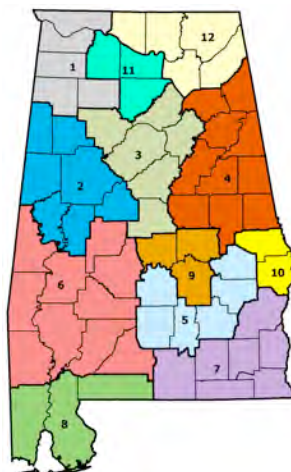
Significantly, it did not have a statewide perspective. Although it was prepared under contract with a department of the State of Alabama, it was still a compilation and there were no decisions from or with a statewide perspective on any overall strategy or overriding policy. While parts could be read from a statewide perspective, the individuality and distinctiveness of each of the twelve Regional Councils came through.

The Alabama Consolidated Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy of 2010

In 2009, the twelve Regional Councils of the State of Alabama, working through the Planning Task Force of the Alabama Association of Regional Councils (AARC), commenced a comprehensive effort to enhance and expand on the previous work and to further support economic development efforts throughout the state. With this new effort, the Planning Task Force developed a four point program to improve the measurement and monitoring of the State's economic development efforts. The program consists of the following:

1. **Benchmarking.** A system of relevant and meaningful economic benchmarks and performance measures to gauge the success of regional and state economic development efforts;
2. **Strategy Update.** An updated, statewide consolidation of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) of the individual Regional Councils, including an itemization of their respective, high-priority economic development projects;
3. **Web-based CEDS Development.** A web-based format for communicating and monitoring Alabama's economic progress on a statewide and sub-state basis, providing accessibility of the economic performance benchmarks to a broad spectrum of users; and
4. **Advisory Committee:** An Advisory Committee consisting of the Regional Councils, the Alabama Development Office (ADO), the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA), the Alabama Rural Development Office (ARDO), the various Rural Planning Organizations, county-based economic development organizations, and other entities involved in economic development for the purpose of providing advice and feedback regarding the usefulness and relevance of the CEDS process.

The Regional Councils



The Alabama Association of Regional Councils (AARC) is a public non-profit organization that represents the municipalities and counties in the State of Alabama through the membership of the individual Regional Councils. The mission of the AARC is to expand

and strengthen the capabilities of the Regional Councils to serve local governments and the citizens of Alabama. Working through the AARC, the Regional Councils form statewide task forces to accomplish missions of statewide importance. AARC's offices are located in Montgomery.

There are twelve Regional Councils within the State of Alabama. The individual Regional Councils are referred to by a number of different names, such as regional commission, regional planning commission, regional planning and development commission, or regional council of governments. The generic term "Regional Council" is used to refer to all twelve. Authorized by the legislature in 1935, the various Regional Councils were formed at different times over the years, in different forms with different service areas. Their powers and duties evolved through subsequent legislation in 1963, 1969 and 1973. In 1985, the twelve Regional Councils in existence at the time were ratified and confirmed by Act No. 85-757 of the Legislature of Alabama. The current twelve Regional Councils and the regions they serve are as follows.

Region 1 (NACOLG). The Northwest Alabama Regional Council of Governments serves five counties in northwest Alabama. These counties are Colbert, Franklin, Lauderdale, Marion and Winston counties. NACOLG's offices are located in Muscle Shoals. (256-389-0500 / www.nacolg.com)

Region 2 (WARC). The West Alabama Regional Commission serves seven counties in west central Alabama. These counties are Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens and Tuscaloosa counties. WARC's offices are located in Northport. (205-333-2990 / www.warc.info)

Region 3 (RPCGB). The Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham serves six counties in central Alabama. These counties are Blount, Chilton, Jefferson, Shelby, St. Clair and Walker counties. RPCGB's offices are located in Birmingham. (205-251-8139 / www.rpcgb.org)

Region 4 (EARPDC). The East Alabama Regional Planning & Development Commission serves ten counties in east central Alabama. These counties are Calhoun, Chambers, Cherokee, Clay, Cleburne, Coosa, Etowah, Randolph, Talladega and Tallapoosa counties. EARPDC's offices are located in Anniston. (205-237-6741 / www.earpdc.org)

Region 5 (SCADC). The South Central Alabama Development Commission serves six counties in south central and southeast Alabama. These counties are Bullock, Butler, Crenshaw, Lowndes, Macon and Pike counties. SCADC's offices are located in Montgomery. (334-244-6903 / www.scadc.al.us)

Region 6 (ATRC). The Alabama-Tombigbee Regional Commission serves ten counties in west central Alabama. These counties are Choctaw, Clarke, Conecuh, Dallas, Marengo, Monroe, Perry, Sumter, Washington and Wilcox counties. ATRC's offices are located in

Camden. (334-682-4234 / www.atrcregion6.org)

Region 7 (SEARPDC). The Southeast Alabama Regional Planning & Development Commission serves seven counties in southeast Alabama. These counties are Barbour, Coffee, Covington, Dale, Geneva, Henry and Houston counties. SEARPDC's offices are located in Dothan. (334-794-4093 / www.searpdc.org)

Region 8 (SARPC). The South Alabama Regional Planning Commission serves three counties in south coastal Alabama. These counties are Baldwin, Escambia and Mobile counties. SARPC's offices are located in Mobile. (251-433-6541 / www.sarpc.org)

Region 9 (CARPDC). The Central Alabama Regional Planning & Development Commission serves three counties in central Alabama. These counties are Autauga, Elmore and Montgomery counties. CARPDC's offices are located in Montgomery. (334-262-4300 / www.carpdc.org)

Region 10 (LRCOG). The Lee-Russell Council of Governments serves two counties in east central Alabama. These counties are Lee and Russell counties. LRCOG's offices are located in Auburn. (334-749-5264 / www.lrcog.com)

Region 11 (NARCOG). The North Central Alabama Regional Council of Governments serves three counties in north central Alabama. These counties are Cullman, Lawrence and Morgan counties. NARCOG's offices are located in Decatur. (256-355-4515 / www.narcog.org)

Region 12 (TARCOG). The Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments serves five counties in northeast Alabama. These counties are DeKalb, Jackson, Limestone, Madison and Marshall counties. TARCOG's offices are located in Huntsville. (256-830-0818 / www.tarcog.org)

The Planning Process for a Consolidated Strategy

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The preparation of an economic development strategy cannot, of course, be done without meaningful participation of the many people, agencies and entities who are involved in the economic development process. For the purposes of this effort, those people, agencies and entities have been organized into three basic groups. These are the Statewide Advisory Committee, the regional Strategy Committees of the various Regional Councils, and broad representation of local community and private sector participation.

Partnership for Sustainable Economic Prosperity

The support and management of this program was made possible by the twelve Regional Councils of the State of Alabama working through the Alabama Association of Regional Councils in partnership with the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs and the United States Economic Development Administration.

The Alabama Association of Regional Councils. The Alabama Association of Regional Councils (AARC) is a public non-profit organization that represents the municipalities and counties in the State of Alabama through the membership of twelve individual Regional Councils. The mission of the AARC is to expand and strengthen the capabilities of the Regional Councils to serve local governments and the citizens of

Alabama. Under the umbrella of the AARC, the Regional Councils are able to undertake and coordinate statewide planning and economic development initiatives that are of statewide consequence.

A Regional Council is a public agency encompassing and serving a multi-jurisdictional regional community. Each Regional Council serves the local governments and citizens of its regional community through communication, planning, policymaking, coordination, consultation, advocacy, technical assistance, and program management.

The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA). The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs was established to provide community and economic development assistance to local governments and non-profit agencies at a single location. The Director, who serves at the pleasure of the Governor, oversees the many divisions within the department that cover a wide range of economic planning and federal grant programs. These programs have the common purpose of strengthening the capacity of communities to develop economically and improve the quality of life in Alabama.

The Economic Development Administration. The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) has the mission of leading the federal economic development agenda by promoting competitiveness and preparing American regions for growth and

success in the worldwide economy. EDA is an agency within the U.S. Department of Commerce that partners with distressed communities throughout the United States to foster job creation, collaboration and innovation.¶

This program is performed and managed through the committee structure of the Planning Task Force of The Alabama Association of Regional Councils in association with a selection of consultants including the Center for Business and Economic Research of The University of Alabama. For more information about this program, contact your local Regional Council or the Alabama Association of Regional Councils.

Statewide Advisory Committee

The members of the Statewide Advisory Committee for this project have identified many opportunities to improve the economic prosperity of the State. Among these opportunities are:

- Diversification and globalization of the economic base.
- Improvements to public education, especially the raising of expectations for public education and equipping students for changing market opportunities.
- Alignment of the resources and capabilities available from institutions of higher education that can be leveraged to promote economic growth.
- Use of emerging economic drivers such as health care technology and broadband technology.
- Use of non-traditional market opportunities for natural resources and the development of non-petroleum based energy economies.

The Regional Councils of the State of Alabama, working through the Alabama Association of Regional Councils (AARC),

began a process in 2006 to improve the coordination of the CEDS process with each other and with the State's economic development priorities. This culminated in the preparation and publication of the 2007 Alabama Consolidated Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

This was followed up with efforts to create a "benchmarking" system of economic indicators and subsequently to prepare a periodic update of the Consolidated Strategy. In 2009, an Advisory Committee made up of the Regional Councils and other entities involved in economic development was established for the purpose of providing advice and feedback regarding the usefulness and relevance of the CEDS Process.

The following entities or organizations were invited to participate in this planning process:

- The Governor's Office
- Alabama Association of Regional Councils
- Alabama Chamber of Commerce Association
- Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industry
- Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs
- Alabama Department of Education
- Alabama Department of Environmental Management
- Alabama Department of Industrial Relations
- Alabama Department of Public Health
- Alabama Department of Senior Services
- Alabama Department of Transportation
- Alabama Development Office
- Alabama Emergency Management Agency
- Alabama Forestry Commission
- Alabama League of Municipalities
- Alabama Office of Workforce Development
- Alabama Rural Action Commission
- Alabama State Data Center
- Alabama State Port Authority
- Alabama Tourism Department
- Association of County Commissions of Alabama

- Economic Development Partnership of Alabama
- Economic Development Association of Alabama
- Retirement Systems of Alabama

An introductory meeting of the Advisory Committee was held on Wednesday, June 10, 2009 at the Alabama Center for Commerce in Montgomery. In addition to the Advisory Committee and the various Regional Councils, representatives of the U.S. Economic Development Administration were in attendance. Information about the program was presented with a short period for discussion following.

The introductory meeting was followed by three brief questionnaires. One questionnaire asked the Committee members what they thought would be the best measures of economic performance over time. The results were used in the development of a companion report entitled “Report on a Benchmarking System for Alabama.” Another questionnaire asked Committee members about the respective roles of their agencies in the economic development process and what they thought were the greatest strengths, weaknesses, problems and opportunities for economic development. The third questionnaire asked for elaboration on primary and secondary agency roles, agency needs and unmet opportunities. Much of the results of the conversations and responses have served to inform the development of this project.

Regional Strategy Committees

The organization designated by EDA for the development of a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is, in ten of the twelve regions within the State of Alabama, the Regional Council for the respective region. These organizations are referred to by EDA as Economic Development Districts or EDD's. In each EDD, a strategy committee is appointed for the purpose of developing the respective regional CEDS. Strategy

committees are designed to represent the main economic interests of the region with a majority of the membership being represented by the private sector. A “private sector representative” is defined as any senior management official or executive holding a key decision-making position with respect to any for-profit enterprise. In addition to private sector representatives, a strategy committee must also include public officials, community leaders, and representatives of workforce development boards, institutions of higher education, minority and labor groups, and private individuals.

Approximately 450 top 500 persons are involved in the regional CEDS processes throughout Alabama. By far, most of these are volunteers who have donated their time to serving on the strategy committee for their area. Each region takes its own approach to the establishment of a strategy committee. Some have as many as 100 members with most committees having about 40 to 80 members. In at least one region, the regional council's board of directors serves as the strategy committee. Some regional strategy committees meet on a regular basis while others meet on an as-needed basis. For a listing of the membership of these committees, the reader should refer to the respective CEDS document for each region.

Local Community and Private Sector Participation

Community and private sector participation is vital to the development of an effective and relevant CEDS process including the process of implementing a CEDS. Regional Councils maintain liaison and partnership with a wide variety of local and regional organizations that may have an interest in economic development. This includes local Chambers of Commerce, county economic development offices, workforce development offices, local tourism agencies, and many more.

As with other parts of the process, the various Regional Councils each take a different course in their community and private sector participation activities. Most of the Regional Councils through-out the State institute a series of meetings in furtherance of the development of regional alliances for economic development. Although some Regional Councils hold as many as a dozen or more meetings, most of them conduct a series of about three meetings in the development of their CEDS and CEDS Updates. These meetings typically included a strategic planning exercise that involves an analysis of regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and the development of a regional vision which identifies goals, strategies and projects. Concurrent with Strategy Committee meetings, some regions hold public meetings at various locations and provide news releases to provide public information. Upon the completion of the meetings and the publication of the CEDS document, the CEDS for each Regional Council is made available for a 30-day review and comment period.

The Economic Situation of the State and the Regions



The purpose of this portion of a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy is to present a background of the economic development situation of a region with a discussion of the economy, population, geography, workforce development and use, transportation access, resources, environment, and other pertinent information. It is intended to paint a realistic picture of current conditions.

Detailed information for this section is contained in two separate reports that are components of this project, those being:

- 1) ***Alabama in the Global Economy: Working Toward a Sustainable Future*** prepared by the Center for Business and Economic Research at The University of Alabama.
- 2) ***Report on an Economic Benchmarking System for Alabama*** prepared by the Planning Task Force of the Alabama Association of Regional Councils with the assistance of Delaney Consultant Services, Inc. and Farmer Associates.

The following paragraphs are from the executive summary of *Alabama in the Global Economy: Working Toward a Sustainable Future* report.

- Alabama's economy was on a rollercoaster ride during the first decade of the 21st century, with a nice period of growth sandwiched between two gradually worsening declines. The state lost 55,700 jobs in the wake of the 2001 recession, although output steadily increased. As Alabama recovered, the four years from 2004 through 2007 brought 130,200 jobs, record low unemployment, and stronger GDP growth. During this period of prosperity, economic development successes helped diversify the state's economy, while state agencies and 2 and 4 year colleges and universities cooperated to provide a prepared workforce.
- However, no state was immune from the Great Recession that began in December 2007. While Alabama's economy plunged into recession relatively late, it fell hard—138,500 jobs were lost from 2008 through 2010 and output contracted by 2.1 percent in 2009. The groundwork laid during the decade was fundamentally sound, though, and by late 2010 employment was beginning to rebound, unemployment was back below the U.S. rate, and real GDP grew around 2.2 percent for the year.
- According to recent rankings of business climate that consider factors such as cost of doing business, workforce readiness, previous investment success, encouragement of entrepreneurship, infrastructure, and prepared sites, Alabama generally ranks in at least the top third of states. But the environment for workers and their families in terms of quality of life and education emerges as a concern that could hamper economic development.
- The state has a significantly lower labor force participation rate than the United States and most of the Southeast, at 58.2 percent. This, along with a 2009 underemployment rate of 24.3 percent, presents a challenge for Alabama's economy. Many of the state's underemployed cite lack of job opportunities in their area as a reason for underemployment. Therefore, in addition to low education levels, spatial mismatch (geographic separation of jobs and workers) likely contributes to underemployment.
- Alabama's traditional industries have gone through significant changes in recent decades as the global economy has restructured. Many mass production operations in manufacturing have moved overseas, with the effect being a decline in employment in industries like primary metals and textiles and apparel manufacturing. This trend is expected to continue, with textiles and apparel having the bleakest outlook.
- Traditional manufacturing industries, however, as well as agriculture, will continue to be a presence in the Alabama economy through greater use of technology and skilled labor. They have a diminished presence in terms of employment, but many of their specialized operations remain, and their local output per worker has risen steadily over the last decade.
- A key development strategy for the state is through industry clusters. A cluster is a geographic concentration of interconnected companies and institutions, which are linked by certain skills of workers, inputs, or technologies. The state should focus on promoting prominent existing clusters, including biotechnology and life sciences, aerospace, and automotive, and on identifying other existing clusters.
- Alabama currently lags most other states in terms of innovation, as characterized by relatively low patent and venture capital levels. However, growing strengths in technology sectors, including life sciences, aerospace, IT, and advanced manufacturing, are helping the state move

in a positive direction. Alabama's 5.6 percent share of employment in high tech for 2009 was second highest among the eight southeastern states. Tech concentrations and growth are focused on the state's metros and are supported by federal contracts and university/industry collaboration.

- While the growing auto manufacturing industry helped drive Alabama exports to a 46.0 percent gain between 2005 and 2008, autos and chemicals also made the state's exports vulnerable in the recession, with a decline of more than 22 percent in 2009. As the global economy recovers, exports are rebounding. Export orientation is closely linked with innovation; the state can increase innovation by pursuing export-oriented strategies in certain industries and by increasing research and development at its major universities.
- Considerable success in growing the economy through foreign direct investment (FDI) over the past decade has raised Alabama's profile globally and is thus breeding further success. Community programs aimed at meeting the cultural needs of international employees and their families, as well as targeted workforce training, help make Alabama an attractive destination for further FDI.
- Transportation is a key factor in the development of the state's economy. Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per capita in Alabama is among the highest in the nation. Changing development patterns to reduce VMT as well as strategically investing in non-roadway transportation facilities (e.g. railroads) will be important to avoiding congestion and promoting transport of the large amount of bulky materials that originate and/or are processed in the state. The economy may further benefit by connecting more areas to the burgeoning air cargo hub in Huntsville and to other large transport hubs at Memphis and Atlanta.
- Population growth of 7.5 percent brought 332,636 new residents to the state between 2000 and 2010; that compares to a 9.7 percent U.S. increase. Gains picked up at mid-decade as job growth helped lure residents from other states and countries. However, Alabama sees relatively little net immigration of 22 to 39 year olds holding an Associate's degree or higher. With an above-average median age of 38.9 and the baby boom generation beginning to move into the 65 and older group, attracting and retaining young adults is essential to providing the workers we need.
- Alabama has one of the lowest educational attainment ranks in the United States, with 82.1 percent of residents 25 and older having a high school diploma or equivalent and 22.0 percent earning a bachelor's degree. Improvements are being made from the preschool level through adult education, including great expansion in technical training programs offered by community colleges to create a targeted and prepared workforce.
- The leading causes of death in the state over the past decade were heart disease, cancer, stroke, lung disease, and motor vehicle accidents, claiming over 332,000 Alabamians. With a sizeable percentage of low birth weight babies, our infant mortality rate was high at 9.5 per 1,000 births in 2009.
- The obesity rate increased 7.7 percentage points to 31.6 percent from 1999 to 2009, directly accounting for 9.1 percent of all medical costs. A third of Alabamians haven't been able to afford healthcare to mitigate these and other costs. Thirty percent of people under the age of 65 were without health insurance for all or part of 2007 to 2008; most were members of working families.
- Alabama's average household wage increased by almost \$10,000 from 2000 to \$38,055 in 2008. Homeownership is among the highest of all the states at 74.1

percent, while monthly household costs are some of the lowest in the country with a median of \$681. The state has among the lowest rates of owners and renters spending more than 30 percent of their monthly income on housing costs.

- Alabama's rural areas have different demographics from urban areas, are suitable for different industries, and therefore should have different development strategies. Rural areas on average have higher proportions of residents age 65 and over and lower proportions of residents of working age in the labor force. More rural residents are presently employed in manufacturing, but development efforts should not aim to significantly grow population or employment in large industries. Instead, rural areas should look to strategies like increased agriculture to serve nearby markets, and ecotourism, including recreational opportunities.
- Of its 33,550,719.9 acres, there are over 1.3 million acres of state or federally protected lands in Alabama. The state ranks third in the country in timberland acreage with 22,700,000 acres—accounting for about 70 percent of its total land area. The growth of Alabama's hardwood and pine forests exceeded removals by over 20 percent from 2000 to 2005.
- Alabama's wetlands hold some of the greatest biodiversity on the continent with over 20 percent of the nation's freshwater passing through the state's waterways. Yet many of these areas remain unprotected from development.
- Most of the state's metro areas stay under the 15 microgram per cubic meter measure for the 3-year annual mean, which is the standard for fine particle pollution as established by the EPA in 1997.

An Analysis of Economic Development Issues

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A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy includes an in-depth analysis of the economic development problems and opportunities of a region. The analysis incorporates relevant material from other government-sponsored or supported plans to show consistency with applicable State and local workforce investment strategies. The analysis also identifies past, present and projected future economic development investments in the region as well as economic clusters, focusing on those that are growing or those that are in decline.

Cross-Cutting Issues

All of the Regions of the State have their own perspective, that is, their own way of looking at issues and their own way of reporting what they find. Some regions look at issues in terms of physical assets. Others are more concerned with cultural and human capital, while still others are concerned with the programs and institutions that are in place to deal with the problems and issues at hand. Some Regions see things in terms of specifics, particularly local assets, while others speak in more general, regionwide terms. Nevertheless, there are a number of common themes, or cross-cutting issues that come up

time and again. In fact, the three primary cross-cutting issue categories that impact all areas of the State of Alabama and require the most attention to assure the continued economic development of the State are:

- Transportation and infrastructure;
- Education and workforce development; and
- Planning and leadership development.

When combined with the closely related issues of growth and sprawl, transportation and infrastructure are clearly the most significant issues of concern with regard to the continued economic development of the State. This is closely followed by education and workforce development. Although few opportunities are identified in this issue category, significantly, it is seen as an asset for the State, particularly with regard to workforce development. In contrast to education and workforce development, planning and leadership within the State is not seen as an asset or strength at all. It is consistently mentioned as a weakness and a threat to the future of the State. Nevertheless, it is also seen as an area of great opportunity if steps are taken to improve and institutionalize the processes necessary to assure better decision-making in the future.

Common Themes

Problems and opportunities are examined by most regions in terms of their relative strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Some will refer to them as assets, liabilities and opportunities. This is sometimes referred to as a “SWOT” analysis. Space doesn’t permit an exhaustive review of all of the problems and opportunities for each and every area of the State, but a summary of the common themes are grouped as follows.

Common themes: Assets

Transportation and infrastructure.

Transportation and infrastructure in its various forms is most often mentioned as the greatest strength among the regions of the State when it comes to those assets that impact economic development. In addition to roads and highways, many regions mention their airports as well as ports, navigable waterways and intermodal facilities in those regions that have access to those facilities.



Education and workforce development.

The higher education system is a statewide asset that obviously brings considerable pride from local people. Many regions mention their public schools, but it is the colleges, universities and workforce development programs that are most mentioned as assets throughout the State.

Natural Resources. Timber, agriculture, forestry, raw materials, and environmental assets, particularly rivers, are consistently listed by the regions as strengths. In fact, it is

often noted that it is the States’ rivers that are prominently shown on the Great Seal of the State.

Health and medical infrastructure. Although there is some disparity between the more urban and more rural regions when it comes to healthcare, hospitals including university based facilities such as UAB are listed among many regions as great strengths for the State.

Industrial parks and sites. Most regions report positively on the availability of developed industrial parks, available land, speculative buildings and incubators.

Other common assets. Other common assets include business and industrial diversity for particular areas of the state; the generally low crime rate, along with fire protection, police and public safety issues; the general quality of life; and other cultural assets.

Common themes: Liabilities

Transportation and infrastructure.

Interestingly, transportation and infrastructure is considered among the most common liabilities as well as among the most common assets. With regard to liabilities, though, specific concerns regard rural transportation, public transit and workforce transportation along with rural sewer service, telecommunications and technological infrastructure. There is concern for aging infrastructure in all categories.

Education and workforce development.

Low education levels, low levels of literacy, lack of a consistently good work ethic, and the lack of vocational/technical training are commonly mentioned as weaknesses. A particular concern is the aging workforce and the retraining of older workers.

Crime and public safety. A common concern among the regions is crime and public safety issues. These concerns typically include substance abuse along with general littering and dumping of trash along roadsides that creates an unappealing environment.

Population shifts. Some regions are concerned with population shifts including a

general decline of population, jobs and manufacturing. These issues are of particular concern with regard to rural areas and older industries such as coal mining and textile manufacturing.

Planning. It is generally acknowledged that the State lacks a pro-active culture of community and regional planning. Home rule and the weakness of effective land development regulations are frequently mentioned. Although there are isolated bright spots, there is concern for the general lack of vision for the future at both the community and regional level.

Other common liabilities. Another common liability is funding and the inability of some communities to match state and federal programs. A few regions also report weaknesses regarding housing and the availability of industrial sites and incubators.



Common themes: Opportunities

Transportation and infrastructure.

Transportation improvements are the most common opportunity sought after as an economic development strategy. Waterways, water ports, airports, railroad upgrades and potential high speed rail with multi-modal facilities are all considered opportunities to enhance economic development efforts statewide. Traffic management plans are needed in some areas as well as better public and mass transit. Infrastructure opportunities include the consolidation of water and sewer systems and advances in communications

technology, particularly, widely available broadband communications.

Tourism. Tourism and associated recreation opportunities are frequently mentioned opportunities along with the numerous attractions throughout the State.

Industrial parks and sites. Most regions report positively on the availability of developed industrial parks, available land, speculative buildings and incubators.

Planning and leadership development.

Often mentioned as a weakness, planning and leadership development is also seen as an opportunity to build for the future. In addition to traditional planning activities, this also includes better intergovernmental cooperation, youth mentoring, and the general development of a collective vision for the future.

Other common opportunities. Other commonly mentioned opportunities include those related to education and workforce development, retiree attraction and agribusiness.

Common themes: Threats

Growth and sprawl. One of the most commonly mentioned threats among the Regions is continued growth, its affect on urban sprawl, and the demand it places on infrastructure. This demand on infrastructure is most often tied to transportation and sewer services. Concerns include the cost of land, the cost of development, the increasing cost of infrastructure, and generally, unplanned growth that leads to overly costly short-term decision-making.

Planning and leadership development.

Related to growth and sprawl, the lack of planning and leadership is the most commonly mentioned threat to the economic future of the State. There is the fear that quality of life will be diminished without better planning for the future, particularly in the rural areas. These issues include urban redevelopment, annexation, rural planning, poor long range planning, the failure to actually implement strategic plans, and fragmented funding for

coordinated planning efforts. A broad base of leadership is stagnant and there is a need to develop leadership among the youth of the State.

Education and workforce development.

Education and workforce development is seen as a threat if education levels are not maintained and improved, and if the general perception of education in Alabama is not improved. There is a continuing need for quality workers, in particular for technical workers. There is a concern that many students are guided away from technical careers.

Other common threats. More so than for assets and liabilities, threats and perceived threats seem to be more wide ranging and more local in nature. Other commonly mentioned threats include funding and taxation issues, air quality and environmental issues, the aging population, old and decaying infrastructure, and the rise of petroleum prices.



Cluster Opportunities

An economic cluster is a core of related economic entities that work together to produce goods and services. Clusters are in contrast to sectors which are defined based on similar industries categorized by *outputs*. A cluster is a group of companies located in a similar geography which work together through

all stages of production from inputs (including goods and services) to outputs. Cluster-based economic development is founded in the concept of targeting investments to conform to the economic strengths of the region or to develop new economic strengths and increase the concentration of inter-dependent, growth-oriented enterprises in the regional economy. According to Harvard Business School, Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness, *Clusters and Cluster Development*, <http://www.isc.hbs.edu/econ-clusters.htm>, accessed February 2010, clusters are described as follows:

“Clusters are geographic concentrations of interconnected companies, specialized suppliers, service providers, and associated institutions in a particular field that are present in a nation or region. Clusters arise because they increase the productivity with which companies can compete. The development and upgrading of clusters is an important agenda for governments, companies, and other institutions. Cluster development initiatives are an important new direction in economic policy, building on earlier efforts in macroeconomic stabilization, privatization, market opening, and reducing the costs of doing business.”

An economic cluster can insure a community against job losses caused by new innovations where two competitors are side-by-side in three ways. First, the specialized workforce will be an asset to the innovating company because many innovations are changes in process which require re-training workers. And, an employee knowledge-able about older techniques will likely adapt well to newer ones (or at least better than an inexperienced one). Second, where the innovation causes the rise of one company at the expense of a competitor, the aggregate effect is diminished. That is, as one boat sinks, the other rises, providing opportunity for the occupants of the first. Finally, in cases where an innovation offers a competitive advantage, clustering promotes imitation among competitors which can stabilize the local economy.

Meanwhile, cluster investments allow increased diversification since they are not attributed to any particular industry or industrial activity. And, to the extent that the economy is not reliant on any particular sector, a loss of competitive advantage and overall productivity in any one sector of the cluster does not necessarily spread throughout the regional economy. The cluster is more capable of maintaining competitive advantage and adjusting to new economic models. All the while, economic activity outside of the cluster still carries on, providing additional support to the regional economy as adjustments occur within sectors or in the wider cluster.

There is no standard process for identifying, marketing, and developing cluster based strategies. The most popular quantitative methods involve analysis of employment, wages, and innovation using statistical data from NAICS or SIC industry codes. Other qualitative methods have been utilized to arrive at similar conclusions based on local industry expertise. The Harvard Business School's Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness (ISC) uses industry codes and geographic analysis to classify clusters for each U.S. state and many substate economic regions. In the ISC's methodology, traded clusters, which are composed of companies that do business across regional, state, or international markets, contrast with local clusters which only do business in the local market place.

The ISC has identified the following traded clusters for the State of Alabama:

- Textiles
- Automotive
- Building Fixtures, Equipment, and Services
- Heavy Construction Services
- Metal Manufacturing
- Prefabricated Enclosures
- Apparel
- Fishing and Fishing Products
- Furniture
- Forest Products
- Motor Driven Products

- Leather and Related Products
- Chemical Products
- Construction Materials
- Aerospace Vehicles and Defense
- Communications Equipment
- Lighting and Electrical Equipment
- Plastics



Each Regional CEDS contains information regarding significant regional clusters. Each document differs in the degree of emphasis placed upon the importance of regional clusters as well as in the methodology employed to identify clusters. The following clusters have been identified in each Regional CEDS:

Region 1: Agribusiness, Food Processing and Technology, Chemicals and Chemical-based Products, Forest and Wood Products, Machinery Manufacturing, and Mining. Emerging cluster(s) in Transportation Equipment Manufacturing and the Manufacturing Super-cluster

Region 2: Government, Manufacturing, Education, Health care

Region 3: Manufacturing, Tourism/Culture/Arts, Movies/Music/Television, Non-Profit organizations, Publishing, Environmental, Healthcare, Research/Academic, Business Incubators, Technology

Region 4: Automobile Manufacturing, Wood Products, Tourism

Region 5: Agriculture and Forest Products, Manufacturing, Distribution, Commerce, Government, Tourism and Retiree Attraction

Region 6: Forest Products, Automotive, Metals Manufacturing

Region 7: Education and Knowledge Creation, Agribusiness, Food Processing and Technology, Transportation & Logistics, Biomedical/ Biotechnical (Life Sciences), Forest and Wood Products, Energy (Fossil and Renewable), Defense and Security

Region 8: Service, Healthcare, High Technology, Maritime, Other Services, Manufacturing, Hospitality and Tourism

Region 9: Automotive, Aerospace, Tourism, Arts and Culture

Region 10: Education, Healthcare, Automotive, Defense and Security

Region 11: Manufacturing Super-cluster, Education & Knowledge Creation, Energy (Fossil & Renewable), Transportation & Logistics, Agribusiness, Food Processing & Technology, Biomedical/Biotechnical (Life Sciences), Business & Financial Services Cluster, Chemicals & Chemical Based Products, Advanced Materials; emerging Automotive

Region 12: Aerospace-Defense, Biomedical and Associated Research, Textiles and Apparel Products

Investment Opportunities

The statement “as the nation and world economies go, so goes Alabama” was never truer than what the state has experienced in the past four years. The years of 2006 and 2007 were boom times for Alabama investment; however the last two quarters of 2008 and throughout 2009 and entering 2010 have mirrored the national and international economic woes.

Although it is very difficult to get an accurate assessment of investment since there is no

standardized reporting mechanism, the Alabama Development Office reports are one indicator. For example, in 2007 ADO reported investment of new and expanding businesses at \$6.8 billion creating 24,244 jobs. In 2008, those figures were \$3.6 billion and 14,609 jobs. Results were mixed in 2009, with total investment falling to \$2.8 billion, while jobs created rose to 16,673. Both measures slipped in 2010, as investment of new and expanding industry decreased to \$2.2 billion and new jobs generated fell to 15,779. It has been made very clear that job creation will be a major measurement in the application for and use of federal grant funds in the future. The regions currently have a mechanism for reporting investment and job creation on a regional basis through the GPRA reporting system. There is question, however, whether this system is comprehensive on a statewide basis.

Across the State, funding is drawn from multiple sources, federal, state and local. Sources such as the Economic Development Administration (EDA), U.S. Department of Transportation, The Delta Regional Authority (DRA), the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) are used for industrial infrastructure needs. State funding of Site Preparation Grants and Industrial Access Road and Bridge funds are other tools.

Other programs include the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Federal Emergency Management (FEMA) and Homeland Security. Special empowerment zones have also been established in some areas, giving incentives for development.

Recent investments in South Alabama include infrastructure in Washington and Mobile counties to support the ThyssenKrupp steel mill located in Calvert. EDA has awarded \$1,500,000 to construct a water tank to serve the site. USDA and CDBG have awarded money to provide sewer service in areas surrounding the site.

Mercedes Benz announced a \$290 million expansion in the West Alabama region in 2009. The expansion includes a 200,000 square foot expansion to the facility and will provide 1,000 additional jobs in 2014 to build Mercedes C-class automobiles. Suppliers for the plant will in turn expand to fulfill the increased demand.

In East Alabama the opening of the Kia Motors plant in West Point, Georgia is expected to have a significant economic impact annually. The plant is to bring new jobs to 34 existing suppliers located in Alabama, lead to expansion of 22 existing suppliers, and will bring 12 new suppliers to the State, according to the Alabama Development Office.

Announced investments in the State, while focused on the auto industry, include various industries including aircraft parts and modification, steel fabrication, ship building, buses, railcars, poultry processing, call centers, distribution centers, and physical and biological research centers.

Related Plans and Studies

In the State of Alabama there are many plans prepared by various State agencies and departments that are pertinent to statewide economic development planning efforts. These plans often include goals that reflect economic development priorities or otherwise support economic development initiatives. Each Regional Council incorporates these and other local plans into the development of their respective CEDS as applicable.

The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) maintains the Statewide Transportation Plan, the current draft Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and the Alabama State Airport Systems Plan. The Alabama Commission on Higher Education maintains the State Plan for Higher Education and lists establishing a Comprehensive Workforce Development Plan in its top five priorities. The Alabama Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) produces the Alabama State Hazard

Mitigation Plan and coordinates approval of the State's individual county hazard mitigation plans. The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) coordinates a host of agency plans: the Alabama State Recreation Plan, Alabama Drought Management Plan, and the Workforce Investment Act Wagner-Peyser State Plan and Local Area Plan.

The ADECA also provides State level management for several federally funded programs that provide grant resources relevant to economic development. Each has plans related to program implementation such as the Appalachian Regional Commission State Strategy, the Delta Regional Authority State Implementation Strategy, the draft Consolidated Plan that includes the Community Development Block Grant program (CDBG), Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG), HOME, and the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) State Plan. These plans address programmatic requirements but often include broad economic development goals as well.

On the environmental front, the State lacks both a comprehensive water management plan and a wetlands conservation plan. A Permanent Joint Legislative Committee on Water Policy and Management has, however, developed a 2009 Initial Report and Recommendations. Additionally, various river basin management plans are in place; the Alabama Clean Water Partnership has been instrumental in completing many of these. The Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) provides two State revolving loan fund programs for Clean Water and Drinking Water. Each of these has an Intended Use Plan that serves as a programmatic guide and lists approved projects. The State has a Wildlife Action Plan, sponsored through the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Agency and the Alabama Forestry Commission recently released its Alabama's Forest Assessment and Resource Strategy, identifying nine concerns that threaten Alabama's forest future. These include urban growth and development, forest fragmentation,

invasive species, changing markets, insects and diseases, wildfire, catastrophic storms, air quality, and climate change.

The State does not currently maintain a statewide economic development plan. However, the Alabama Development Office, ADECA, the Economic Development Agency of Alabama, and the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama have spearheaded several statewide economic development planning efforts. Past planning accomplishments over the years have produced the State of Alabama Strategic Plan for Economic Development (1993), Vision Alabama – A Plan for Quality Growth (1994), and Vision 20/20: Alabama Manufacturing - A Strategic Session for Global Competitiveness (1995). Various promotional publications such as the Alabama Economic Development Guide are produced that serve as recruitment tools. These contain excellent information about the unique regions in the State. Numerous other publications and reports have been produced over the years by The University of Alabama, Auburn University, Alabama Power Company, the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama and others.

Local level economic development planning has been accomplished through the Economic Development Administration (EDA) supported Economic Development Districts (EDD's) in the State. Each district maintains its respective Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) in compliance with EDA regulations.

The consolidated CEDS planning effort has sought to incorporate local, State, and federal level economic development priorities through the utilization of each region's CEDS, available State plans, and Federal program initiatives. The following list includes many of the related plans, reports and studies that were consulted in the production of the various regional CEDS and/or this Consolidated Strategy. They are organized by state and regional agencies and include the title and date, source, and type or topic of the study.

Funding Programs

Alabama Consolidated 5 year plan, 2010-2014
CDBG, ESG, HOME, Housing persons with AIDS

Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs

Appalachian Regional Commission State Strategy, 2010

Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs

Community Services Block Grant State Plan, 2009 – 2010

Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs

Alabama Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), 2008

Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs / LWCF / RTP

Delta Regional Implementation Strategy for Alabama, 2005

Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs / Delta Regional Authority

Transportation

Draft Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, 2009

Alabama Department of Transportation

State Transportation Plan Update, 2007

Alabama Department of Transportation

Alabama Statewide Airport System Plan, 2005

Alabama Department of Transportation, Aeronautics Bureau

Economic Development

Alabama Economic Development Guide, 2009
Annual Publication – PMT Publishers

Annual State Economic Report Alabama, 2008
EDA / Auburn University

Alabama Local Economic Development Survey, 2006

Auburn University

Draft Crossroads and Connections Strategies for Rural Alabama

Joe Summers, Larry Lee

Benchmarking Alabama's Economic
Development for the 21st Century, 1998
Southern Technology Council

Draft Vision 20/20: Alabama and
Manufacturing - A Strategic Session for Global
Competitiveness, 1995
Alabama Department of Economics and
Community Affairs / Auburn University

Vision Alabama, 1994
Economic Development Partnership of
Alabama
/ Economic Development Association of
Alabama

State of Alabama Strategic Plan for Economic
Development, 1993
Economic Development Partnership of
Alabama

Workforce Development

WIA and Wagner-Peyser State Plan, 2009
Office of Workforce Development

Local Area Plan - Full Document, 2005-2006
Office of Workforce Development

Environment

Alabama Department of Environmental
Management 2009 Strategic Plan, 2009
Alabama Department of Environmental
Management

Report to Governor - Environmental Initiatives,
2001
Alabama Commission of Environmental
Initiatives

Historic Preservation

Alabama State Historic Preservation Plan,
2008
Alabama Historical Commission

Emergency Management

State Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2007
Alabama Emergency Management Agency

Alabama Drought Management Plan, 2004
Alabama Department of Economic and
Community Affairs, Office of Water
Resources

Telecommunications

Alabama Strategic Plan for
Telecommunications, 1998
Alabama Department of Economic and
Community Affairs DECA, Science,
Technology and Energy



A Short Selection of Readings on Sustainability

Berea College Official Website, Sustainable Appalachian Communities Resource Guide
Presents resources that an individual/community can use to evaluate and make goals for the future of a community. Also, presents case studies and examples to improve the local economy in a sustainable manner.

City Council, et. al., City of Boulder, Social Sustainable Strategic Plan

This Plan is designed to address emerging social and community concerns in a proactive and integrated manner. The Plan identifies goals and strategies which are responsive to those concerns. The purpose of this Plan is three-fold: to emphasize goals and strategies which address identified social concerns; to provide policy guidelines on priority goals addressing social concerns; and to lay the foundation for an integrated approach to planning and policy development for social, economic and environmental sustainability under the vision of community sustainability.

Gage J., Measuring Economic Progress

What defines sustainable economic development? In his article, the Director of the Sustainable Communities of the Mountain Association for Community Economic Development describes the differences between the Gross National Product (or Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI). The article goes into details about the shortcomings of GDP and privileges of GPI, as more efficient tool to measure sustainable economic development. The article also brings examples of successful planning of sustainable economic development by different counties (such as Clay County, Morgan County, KY; Fayette County, WV) and

sustainability indicators that characterize better/poor sustainable communities.

Grisham V., and Gurwitt R., The Tupelo Model
The Tupelo Model illustrated in this article, outlines the successful building of an economically viable community with a broad base including all the human resources in the community.

Ikerd J, E., Toward an Economics of Sustainability

Sustainability is a long-run, people-centered concept. Sustainable development, as used in this paper, means meeting the needs and wants of people of the current generation while leaving equal or better opportunities for people of the generation to follow. The article talks about the development of resources: natural, human, and economic, about the benefits of the development both for current and future generations.

Kates R. W., Parris T. M., and Leiserowitz A. A., What is Sustainable Development?

Freedom, development, and environment are key themes in the last half of the twentieth century that the world is concerned about. The article goes into details about the definition of sustainable development, measurement of sustainable development and definitions of sustainable development implicitly or explicitly adopted by selected indicator initiatives.

Rees W. E., PhD, Economics and Sustainability: Conflict or Convergence?

Sustainability through expansion: Introducing the Modern Myth. Most so-called development policy is aimed at promoting the rapid growth of national economies and gross world product. The doctrinal authority for the expansionist vision is drawn from neoliberal (neoclassical) market economics. Neoclassical models promote the untrammelled marketplace as the most efficient way of increasing production/ consumption and global free trade as providing the largest-and most profitable-possible market. This approach naturally diminishes the role of government, elected or

otherwise, since any interference in the working market is, by definition, inefficient. They also don't see environment as a necessary part for business to be preserved and kept for the next generations. Ecological economists argue that the economy is not a separate isolated system, but rather is an inextricably integrated, completely contained, and wholly dependent subsystem of the ecosystem.

Strong M., International Development Research Center

The Local Agenda 21 Planning Guide has been prepared to assist local governments and their local partners to learn and undertake the challenging tasks of sustainable development planning. This planning is a fundamental first step that will enable them to provide the residents of their communities with basic human needs, rights, and economic opportunities, and at the same time ensure a vital, healthy, natural environment, in other words, a planning approach that will enable them to manage their cities, towns and/or rural settlements in a sustainable way. The Guide is based on more than five years of experience of cities and towns in all world regions that are in the process of integrating planning and action across economic, social and environmental spheres.

Summit County Comprehensive Plan, Economic Sustainability Elements

Issues related to land use, environment, transportation, housing, facilities, cultural resources, open space, recreation, trails, and the economy are not mutually exclusive. It is the intent for all elements of the Plan to work

together to support sustainable development, enhance visitor experiences, and improve the quality of life of all residents.

U.S Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies Guidelines (CEDS).

CEDS is the result of local planning process designed to guide the economic growth of an area. A CEDS process is intended to create jobs, foster stable and diversified economies, and improve living conditions. It provides a mechanism for coordinating the efforts of organizations, local governments, and private industry concerned with economic development.

White E., Shifting Paradigms

Since the end of World War II, the perspective in the Western world has primarily been to equate economic development with industrialization. Although some communities have experienced economic growth as a result of a focus on industrialization, the overall benefits are frequently diminished by a plethora of unforeseen externalities, such as mass migration into the industrialized areas and out of rural areas which leads to high level of unemployment and shortages of public goods and services. Policymakers and development practitioners are approaching economic development from a broader perspective that emphasizes "local solution to local problems" instead of a "one size fits all" strategy. The article presents an evolution of thought that is gradually lifting millions of the world's poorest from the throes of poverty into a sustainable economic development.

The Vision of the Regional Councils for Sustainable Economic Prosperity

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Collectively, Alabama's Regional Councils represent the entire State of Alabama by working to plan and implement strategies that create opportunities for development and prosperity. The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) of any of Alabama's twelve regions reflects the goals, objectives and priorities specific to a given region. Through public outreach and constant contact with key stakeholders, the regional councils develop strategic plans for their regions. The process involves hundreds of participants, including the public, elected officials, economic developers, workforce representatives, and business leaders. As a result, the CEDS reflects the circumstances of its region and represents a strong and legitimate foundation for a statewide strategy for economic and community development.

Regional councils often differ in approach, reflecting the wide variety of goals and objectives in communities and regions across the State. However, careful examination of each regional CEDS reveals that the regions of the State are bound together by a common vision and many of the same values. As the Planning Task Force approached the creation of a statewide strategy, each of the regional

CEDS was examined to find commonalities and to understand which goals and objectives had resonance throughout the State. It was understood that individual strategies and vital projects would differ, and that each region's CEDS would vary as to how it was structured. However, the Planning Task Force was charged to review the regional CEDS and discover what, if any, common purposes were represented.

The vision, goals, and objectives of each regional CEDS were placed in a matrix. Hundreds of statements were reviewed and organized based on common themes. The following Vision, Values, Goals and Objectives reflect the most common elements contained in the regional CEDS throughout the State. This planning framework was chosen to emphasize the shared values of the regional councils, which work independently within their regions and cooperate across regions for statewide progress. The vision, values and goals reflect the commonality of purpose shared by Alabama's Regional Councils and serve as a comprehensive and representative statewide economic development strategy for the State of Alabama.

VALUES

Vision Statement

It is the vision of the Regional Councils of the State of Alabama that the State shall advance its prosperity by ensuring the optimal health and well being of its people, its environment, and its economy.

This vision statement addresses the advancement of prosperity for the people of Alabama by encompassing three distinct sets of values. These values, and goals that are derived from them, are described in the following paragraphs. They involve:

- Community wellness;
- Environmental Vitality; and
- Economic Prosperity

Alabama's regional councils are committed to realizing this shared vision by promoting these values and goals as they seek economic and community development in the regions across the State. As critical partners throughout the State, it is vital that the regional councils take an active, engaged role in the preparation and implementation of a strategy to prepare the State of Alabama to move into the future with an understanding and consensus regarding the approaches that are most representative of the existing conditions, needs, and strategic planning efforts of communities across the State. This process has involved hundreds of stakeholders in the creation of the regional plans. The current synthesis presents the critical, common elements of a coherent, comprehensive statewide strategy drawn from the efforts of the regions.

Community Wellness

The Regional Councils of Alabama value communities that preserve their unique character and provide people access to quality housing, education, employment, and health services.

Goals that address Community Wellness

Direct resources toward established communities.

- Identify resources and provide needed plans and services for local governments.
- Rehabilitate & maintain existing housing stocks.
- Invest in housing initiatives, mixed use, and urban re-development.
- Increase transportation options & access to bicycle, pedestrian and public transit routes.
- Ensure quality and capacity of existing infrastructure systems.

Increase the range of choices for housing, health care, and education.

- Advance availability of affordable & quality housing for all ages, incomes & abilities.
- Increase access & options for health care.
- Promote regional approaches to improve community services.
- Expand access to technology and facilities that increase educational opportunities.

Maximize human capital by increasing competencies to meet global expectations.

- Promote expanded job training programs targeted to regional needs that support global competitiveness.
- Coordinate local workforce efforts with state initiatives.
- Involve business & industry in planning & implementation of vocational & training programs.

VALUES

Environmental Vitality

The Regional Councils of Alabama value a diverse natural environment and the wise and efficient use of resources for social, cultural, and economic needs.

Goals that address Environmental Vitality

Promote sound management of natural capital.

- Promote comprehensive statewide environmental planning efforts.
- Encourage use of planning tools to protect and efficiently utilize natural resources.
- Acquire, develop and maintain a variety of passive and active recreational facilities.

Designate and protect critical environmental areas.

- Identify and inventory environmentally significant and critical ecosystems.
- Support and promote stronger conservation efforts.
- Generate natural resource plans to address watersheds, wetlands, critical habitats and migration corridors.

Foster statewide participation in environmental stewardship.

- Encourage state and federal agencies to develop a unified state message to promote environmental education.
- Identify, protect, and preserve valuable historic resources.
- Partner with public and private groups to increase access to environmental programs and services.

Economic Prosperity

The Regional Councils of Alabama value a globally responsive and viable economy that seeks quality development.

Goals that address Economic Prosperity

Align efforts and assets of business, government, and educational institutions.

- Invest in entrepreneurship and innovation.
- Increase retention and expansion of existing industry.
- Increase access to venture capital and technology.
- Facilitate development of existing and emerging economic clusters.

Invest in regional development strategies.

- Promote tourism and cultural assets.
- Maximize use of existing industrial and commercial sites.
- Increase development of agri-business and related trades.
- Coordinate and enhance use of inter-modal facilities – road, rail, water, air.

Foster a statewide collaborative spirit of leadership.

- Promote leadership programs at local, regional, and state level.
- Encourage and support youth leadership programs.
- Promote involvement of private sector in creating economic development strategies.
- Improve intergovernmental cooperation and coordination.
- Encourage a wider cross-section of leaders to fill board and elected positions.

Promoting the Vision for Sustainable Economic Prosperity

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Alabama's regional councils exist to coordinate services for the growth of regions. The work of the regional councils is shaped largely by a shared vision, values, goals, and objectives. Each council takes numerous and varied actions to implement these values. An examination of the activities and services performed by Alabama's regional councils indicates a commitment to providing high quality, professional planning and development services across the State. Although each regional council differs with regard to the exact menu of services offered, there is a degree of consistency. Alabama's regional councils will take action to implement the vision of this state-wide strategy. Where appropriate, Alabama's regional councils will...

Maintain Stakeholder Communications.

Work closely with stakeholders and elected officials to plan and implement economic development under the direction, guidance, and funding of the Economic Development Administration (EDA). The councils will establish continuous planning process to develop and implement regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS). The regional councils will maintain active CEDS committees, compliant board membership, and meet

EDA's requirements for reporting performance toward implementation.

Provide Technical Assistance.

Provide technical assistance to local governments for grant writing, planning, information, guidance, etc. for economic and community development. The regional councils will continue to be a resource for local governments across the State, improving understanding of and access to the resources necessary for successful economic and community development. The councils will facilitate the involvement of additional stakeholders, coordinate and leverage resources, and provide support services to improve the capacity of local governments as a means of improving statewide capacity for economic and community development success.

Coordinate Planning.

Coordinate transportation planning and transit programs in rural and urban areas, as appropriate. Through Rural and Metropolitan Planning Organizations, the Regional Councils will plan for improvements to transportation infrastructure and transit opportunities across the State. The councils will facilitate required planning and outreach for programs related to transportation and transit.

Expand Leadership Capacity.

Work with boards and commissions across the State to expand and improve leadership, workforce development, and community development capacity. The Regional Councils will continue to work alongside established partners such as the Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE) program, the State Workforce Development Councils, and the Rural Action Commissions to plan, find funding, and implement programs to improve economic and community development across the State.

Although each regional council offers different services, these important actions are common across the State and are necessary to implement the State strategy. Alabama's Regional Councils will continue to offer these and other services throughout the State. Additionally, each regional council will work to strengthen and improve relationships and partnerships with federal, State, and local stakeholders and agencies that may offer these or similar services.

In addition to the actions generally listed above, each Regional Council, in the development of its regional Comprehensive

Economic Development Strategy, must detail a plan of action. The plan of action to implement the regional goals and objectives may contain any number of areas of focus depending on the particular needs of the particular region:

- 1) Promote economic development and opportunity;
- 2) Foster effective transportation access;
- 3) Enhance and protect the environment;
- 4) Maximize effective development and use of the workforce consistent with any applicable State or local workforce development strategy;
- 5) Promote the use of technology in economic development, including access to high-speed telecommunications;
- 6) Balance resources through sound management of physical development; and
- 7) Obtain and utilize adequate funds and other resources.

Strategic Projects and Programs

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In furtherance of promoting the vision for sustainable economic prosperity, the respective Regional Councils conceive development projects and programs in five basic program areas that, taken together, have statewide impact. These program areas are:

- Moving people and goods;
- Maximizing human capital;
- Creating and maintaining personal wealth;
- Building healthy communities; and
- Responding to base realignment and closure.

The Regional CEDS' collectively represent over 2,000 projects and programs. The Regional Councils then consider and submit projects and programs that have been identified within the process of preparing their

respective regional CEDS and which they believe represent the priority projects for their region. The following projects and programs include over 60 that were selected for inclusion in this report. These projects, admittedly, do not represent the full range of projects and programs that would, or should, be considered to promote sustainable economic prosperity, nor do they represent the breadth of projects and programs available at the state, regional and local levels. These projects primarily reflect infrastructure and workforce development needs that were submitted by local officials and further prioritized by the Regional Councils for inclusion in this report. They are grouped by four "priority strategies." These could be considered "statewide" priorities which individual projects would support. These "priority strategies" are:

Transportation Infrastructure - 31 projects which address program area 1;

Industrial Infrastructure - 11 projects which address program area 3

Community Infrastructure - 9 projects which address program area 4; and

Education and Workforce Development and Other Projects – 10 projects which address program area 2.

Transportation Infrastructure

Project	Region / Location	Impact / Cost
(a) I-22 from Jasper to Birmingham. Complete improvements connecting US 78 to I-65 and designate as I-22.	Region 1 / Birmingham	Statewide / \$300.0 million
(b) Highway 24 (Corridor V). Complete improvements to Appalachian Highway Development Corridor V.	Region 1 / Franklin County	Regional / \$100.0 million
(c) U.S. 82. Complete widening of U.S. 82 to four lanes.	Region 2 / Bibb and Pickens Counties	Regional / \$185.5 million
(d) North-South Corridor. Construct North-South Corridor through West Alabama.	Region 2 / Multiple locations in West Alabama	Statewide / Cost to be determined (tbd)
(e) Northern Beltline. Construct 52 mile interstate connecting I 20/59 and I 59.	Region 3 / Birmingham area	Regional / \$3.5 billion
(f) U.S. Highway 431. Widen U.S. Highway 431 to four lanes from I-20 to I-85.	Region 4 / Calhoun, Cleburne, Lee, Randolph and Chambers Counties	Regional / Cost tbd
(g) Montgomery Southern Outer Loop. Complete the outer loop to improve transportation access for communities south of Montgomery.	Region 5 / Montgomery area	Regional / \$50.0 million
(h) Macon County Interstate Exit. Develop an additional exit in Macon County along Interstate 85.	Region 5 / Macon County	Regional / \$15.0 million
(i) I-10 Connector. Construct an Interstate Connector to I-10.	Region 7 / Houston, Dale and Geneva Counties	Regional / \$400.0 million
(j) I-10 Mobile River Bridge. Six lane	Region 8 /	Statewide /

interstate bridge over the Mobile River and Bayway improvements.	Mobile River	\$1,000.0 million
(k) Outer Loop – Northern and Southern Loops. Connector from I-85 to I-65 North and South.	Region 9 / Elmore and Montgomery Counties	Statewide / \$900.0 million
(l) I-65 Interchange at Autauga CR 40. Development of a new interchange.	Region 9 / Autauga County	Regional / \$30.0 million
(m) State Highway 14 Bridge and Loop. Development of a new bridge crossing the Tallapoosa River with connecting loop at Tallassee.	Region 9 / Elmore and Tallapoosa Counties	Regional / Cost tbd
(n) Widen State Highways 14, 63 and 229. Improve transportation within Elmore County running North, South, East and West.	Region 9 / Elmore County	Regional and local / Cost tbd
(o) Fort Benning West Gate Access Improvements. Road widening, resurfacing, bridge replacement to improve access into the West Gate of Fort Benning from the Fort Mitchell area of Russell County.	Region 10 / Hwy 165 and County Road 24 in Russell County	Regional / \$16.1 million
(p) Exit 50 on I-85. Addition of Exit 50 on Interstate I-85 in Auburn AL. The new exit will increase transportation access into and out of three Auburn Technology Parks.	Region 10 / I-85 and County Road 10-Beehive Road	Regional / \$26.8 million
(q) Widen I-65. Widen I-65 to 6-lanes to TN line.	Region 11 / Cullman/Morgan County	Regional / Cost tbd
(r) Alabama Hwy 20 (I-565 ext.). Make controlled access and widen.	Region 11 / Decatur/Limestone County	Regional / \$96.0 million
(s) Corridor V Memphis to Atlanta Highway. Develop interstate grade highway corridor.	Region 11 / North Alabama	Statewide / Cost tbd
(t) Jetplex Access Road. Industrial park	Region 12 /	Local /

access road.	Madison County	\$11.0 million
(u) Opelika Industrial Access Road. This access road would link the Northeast Opelika Industrial Park with the Cusseta Industrial Park in Chambers County.	Region 10 / North Park Drive near Exit 66 on I-85	Regional / \$5.5 million
(v) Gadsden Airport Industrial Park. Expansion, Phase II.	Region 4 / Etowah County	Local / \$8.0 - \$10.0 million
(w) McClellan Industrial Access Roads. Continue construction of the Anniston Eastern Bypass and the industrial access roads to connect the McClellan Industrial and Research Parks to I-20 and US Hwy 431/AL Hwy 21.	Region 4 / Calhoun County	Local / \$4.0 million
(x) Corridor Study for West Alabama Freeway. Complete north-south corridor/environmental study for controlled access highway connecting the Shoals to Mobile.	Region 1 / West Alabama	Statewide / \$30.0 million
(y) U.S. Highway 231 Access Management/4-Lane Vaughn Rd. Access management of Hwy 231 through Troy/4-lane Vaughn Rd from Montgomery to Bullock County.	Region 5 / City of Troy/Bullock Co.	Regional / \$5.0 million
(z) In Town Transit Partnership. Downtown bus rapid transit with vehicles, facilities, and infrastructure providing connectivity to regional transit services.	Region 3 / Metro Birmingham	Regional / \$60.0 million
(aa) Birmingham Airport Improvements. Air cargo, facility, and runway improvements.	Region 3 / Jefferson County	Regional / Cost tbd
(bb) Promote and expand Dothan Regional Airport. Add additional air carrier, expand runways.	Region 7 / Dothan	Regional / \$10.0 million

(cc) Intermodal Rail Transfer Facility.

Region 8 /
City of Mobile

Regional /
Cost tbd

(dd) Mobile Baldwin Passenger Ferry and Terminal. High speed ferry.

Region 8 /
Mobile River

Local /
\$2.8 million

(ee) N/S CSX Railroad. Widen/increase capacity.

Region 11 /
Cullman/Morgan
County

Statewide /
Cost tbd

Industrial Infrastructure

Project	Region / Location	Impact / Cost
(a) Cedar Cove Industrial Park Improvements. Site prep and acquisition at Cedar Cove Industrial Park for incoming Mercedes suppliers.	Region 2 / Tuscaloosa County	Regional / \$3.3 million
(b) Airport Industrial Park Infrastructure Improvements. Extend water and sewer to spec building at Airport Industrial Park.	Region 2 / Tuscaloosa County	Regional / \$ 1.6 million
(c) Supporting Infrastructure for Honda. Continue to upgrade and expand supporting infrastructure as needed to facilitate continued expansion of Honda plant in Lincoln.	Region 4 / Talladega County	Regional / Cost tbd
(d) Suppliers. Infrastructure improvements at industrial parks in Jackson and Thomasville.	Region 6 / Clarke County	Regional / \$5.0 million
(e) Suppliers. Provide sewer services to suppliers in Washington County.	Region 6 / Washington County	Regional / \$15.0 million
(f) Trucking Terminal. Infrastructure for planned trucking terminal at Wilcox County Industrial Park.	Region 6 / Wilcox County	Local / \$2.0 million

(g) Industrial. Infrastructure improvements.	Region 6 / Monroe County	Local / \$1.5 million
(h) U.S. Steel. Infrastructure for U.S. Steel's planned facility at the Port of Epes.	Region 6 / Port of Epes in Sumter County	Regional / \$3.0 million
(i) Infrastructure Improvements for SaeHaeSung Alabama. Water, Sewer, Well.	Region 7 / Andalusia Industrial Park	Local / \$3.5 million
(j) Supporting Infrastructure for Hybrid Kinetic Motors. Upgrade and support infrastructure as needed to provide for the construction of the Hybrid Kinetic Motors Plant in Bay Minette.	Region 8 / Baldwin County	Regional / \$4.3 billion
(k) Bellefonte Nuclear Initiative. Infrastructure support of TVA's Bellefonte Nuclear Power Plant.	Region 12 / Jackson County	Statewide / \$3.0 billion

Community Infrastructure

Project	Region / Location	Impact / Cost
(a) I-65 Sewer Extension. Extend Ft. Deposit's municipal sewer service to the exit at Interstate 65.	Region 5 / Town of Fort Deposit	Regional / \$2.5 million
(b) Butler County Water Supply. Additional water well in the Ripley Aquifer to supply all water needs in Butler County.	Region 5 / Butler County	Local / \$5.0 million
(c) Regional Water Reservoir. Development of a Water Reservoir for Coffee, Dale, Geneva and Houston Counties.	Region 7 / Dothan	Regional / \$140.0 million
(d) Countywide Sanitary Sewer Improvements. Various sanitary sewer improvements.	Region 9 / Autauga, Elmore and Montgomery Counties	Regional and local / Cost tbd

(e) County Water System Improvements. Various water system improvements to include plants and distribution systems.

Region 9 /
Autauga, Elmore and
Montgomery Counties

Regional and local /
Cost tbd

(f) Phenix City Drainage System Improvements. Drainage system is inadequate and leading to infiltration of storm water and ground water into the sewer system. This issue affects residential and industrial areas of the City and also has environmental impacts on counties and municipalities that border the City.

Region 10 /
City of Phenix City

Regional /
\$13.0 million

(g) Southeast Lee County Sewer Expansion. Increase sewer services to the Smiths Station portion of Lee County. This portion of the county is growing rapidly and must rely on septic tanks/lagoons. The area is prone to septic system failure.

Region 10 /
City of Smiths Station

Local /
\$17.0 million

(h) Ft. Payne Wastewater. Wastewater system upgrades.

Region 12 /
DeKalb County

Local /
\$1.8 million

(i) Countywide Wastewater. Various local wastewater improvements.

Region 12 /
Marshall County

Local /
Cost tbd

Education and Workforce Development and Other

Project	Region / Location	Impact / Cost
(a) UNA Science Building. Construct new science building on the campus of the University of North Alabama.	Region 1 / Florence	Regional / \$75.0 million
(b) Shelton State Vocational Programs. Expand Shelton State vocational programs.	Region 2 / Tuscaloosa County	Regional / Cost tbd

(c) Internet in Rural Schools. Extend high speed Internet service and facilities to all rural schools in the region.

Region 4 /
Region-wide

Regional /
Cost tbd

(d) Technology Centers. Education and training center (Incubators, Entrepreneurial Centers and Research Centers) for startup business and research centers.

Region 8 /
State-wide

Regional /
\$5.0 million

(e) Technology/Research Park. Bring successful market research completed by universities to the commercial market.

Region 8 /
Baldwin County

Regional /
\$1.5 million

(f) Robotics Research and Development Complex. Education and training center for advanced technology robotics research and development at Calhoun Community College.

Regions 11 and 12
Limestone County

Regional /
\$71.0 million

(g) Revolving Loan Fund. Funding the gap financing needs of small, targeted businesses in the region.

Region 3 /
Region-wide

Regional
\$1.0 million

(h) GET Implementation. Funding the implementation of "Growth, Employment, Transit" (GET) plans, which serve as comprehensive plans for freight facilities and their workforce, housing, and mobility needs.

Region 3 /
Region-wide

Regional /
Cost tbd

(i) Regional Medical Hub. Expand status as regional medical hub through development of an Osteopathic Medical School.

Region 7 /
Dothan

Statewide /
\$40.0 million

(j) Huntsville-Redstone EUL. Mixed use development in conjunction with BRAC developments at Redstone Arsenal.

Region 12 /
Madison County

Regional /
\$44.0 million

Measuring Sustainable Economic Prosperity

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Introduction

A comprehensive economic development strategy is to contain a list of performance measures used to evaluate successful development and implementation of the CEDS. It may include but is not limited to:

- 1) the number of jobs created after implementation of the CEDS;
- 2) number and types of investments undertaken in the Region;
- 3) number of jobs retained in the Region;
- 4) amount of private sector investment in the Region after implementation of the CEDS; and
- 5) changes in the economic environment of the region.

These are not meant to be the only performance measures for the CEDS. Each of the twelve regions uses its own methods to ascertain progress and performance towards the accomplishment of their respective CEDS goals. All EDD designated regions must prepare an annual update report for submission to the Economic Development Administration listing their accomplishments. Some regions tie performance criteria to their goals and objectives while others tie their criteria to specific project accomplishment. Some regions include their listing of prior year accomplishments in their updated CEDS. Two regions use a rating scale to grade their progress toward completing their projects and

grading their CEDS process. Although many regions include projected cost estimates or list the costs associated with active projects, the discussion regarding Region 7 below describes an overall performance summary that quantifies dollars of public and private investment and the number of jobs created, retained and projected. This reflects the GPRA reporting system.

Regional Methods of Performance Evaluation

The following is a brief description of the individual Regional CEDS evaluation methods.

Region 1 (NACOLG). NACOLG uses an evaluation system to make a quantifiable assessment of the success of the CEDS process. A numerical average is calculated to offer a general evaluation of the EDD's performance in meeting CEDS goals. Implementation items are scored on a scale as to whether the project or program has seen no discernable progress up to project completion. A score lower than five indicates either: a lack of suitable progress; or, the goals were too ambitious in relation to the resources available. The assessment triggers a re-evaluation of the CEDS process, staffing and priorities and serves as a catalyst for an improved CEDS process for the following year.

Region 2 (WARC). WARC lists its accomplishments for the prior year in relation to its CEDS goals as an indication of performance. In its current update, WARC reports 35 accomplishments during the past year.

Region 3 (RPCGB). RPCGB specifies individual performance measures for each project listed in its CEDS. At the end of each year, RPC evaluates progress made on each task to remove completed tasks, revise ongoing tasks, and add new tasks. Progress is reported in the Annual Plan of Work and reflected in the annual CEDS update.

Region 4 (EARPDC). EARPDC specifies individual performance measures for each objective contained in its development strategy. Performance measures range from one criterion for measurement in some cases to as many as ten criteria in others. EARPDC also provides a status report on active projects. Twenty six active projects were listed through June 30, 2006 with eleven projects being closed within the last year.

Region 5 (SCADC). SCADC specifies individual performance measures for each project listed in its CEDS. SCADC performs regular review of progress towards objectives and projects and consideration of action or implementation teams to share responsibility for implementation and the leveraging of resources. A separate report reflects progress toward individual projects. The progress report is reviewed by the CEDS Strategy Committee and the SCADC Board of Directors as part of the CEDS update process.

Region 6 (ATRC). Each year, ATRC and the CEDS Strategy Committee comes together to evaluate the effectiveness and appropriateness of the CEDS. Individual projects and the CEDS as a whole is examined by asking the following questions: 1) is the current CEDS addressing the Region's current economic state; 2) is the current CEDS implementation meeting expectations; and 3) what changes or

modifications could be made to the CEDS to make it more effective for the region?

Region 7 (SEARPDC). SEARPDC periodically evaluates the CEDS to ensure that regional economic development goals are being accomplished. The CEDS evaluation is completed on an annual basis and recommendations are incorporated into the annual CEDS update. SEARPDC also provides information on the status of individual, active projects and accomplishments. SEARPDC goes one step further to provide an evaluation summary that measures the total performance of the CEDS process. For example, for the current CEDS, SEARPDC reports:

1) Total number of grants and loans:	71
2) Total grant and loan dollars:	\$23,452,264
3) Total public and private sector investment:	\$33,227,528
4) Total jobs created/retained:	602
5) Total jobs projected:	701

Region 8 (SARPC). SARPC specifies individual performance measures for each project listed in its CEDS. The evaluation process includes meetings with the SARPC Commission and public meetings prior to updates. Annual reports are prepared to outline the progress achieved on development activities and to report on changing economic conditions.

Region 9 (CARPDC). CARPDC specifies individual performance measures for each project listed in its CEDS.

Region 10 (LRCOG). LRCOG prepares an update report that contains all necessary information for evaluating and monitoring the progress of reported goals and objectives. An annual review of the report allows the staff to make necessary changes and recommendation to officials and citizens of the region.

Region 11 (NARCOG). NARCOG specifies individual performance measures for each

project listed in its CEDS. At the end of each year, NARCOG evaluates progress made on each task to remove completed tasks, revise ongoing tasks, and add new tasks. Progress is reported in the Annual Plan of Work and reflected in the annual CEDS update.

Region 12 (TARCOG). TARCOG specifies individual performance measures for active projects listed in its CEDS. TARCOG conducts an annual review to determine regional progress and report findings to the EDA as part of its ongoing CEDS process. In addition, TARCOG has developed an evaluation plan for the CEDS that is based on four overall performance measures which are rated on a scale from 1 to 7 with 7 being “best performance.” The performance measures are scored by the CEDS Committee with the results used to determine which activities to keep, which ones to modify and which possible new activities to be developed.

In preparing the *Report on an Economic Benchmarking System for Alabama* that is an integral component of this effort, the Planning Task Force selected and described economic indicators for the use of the Regional Councils, but further recognized the need to go beyond benchmarking economic indicators and begin looking at the broad spectrum of indicators of sustainability. Future efforts at a statewide Consolidated Strategy should include efforts to develop such measures of sustainability.

Measuring Sustainability

All of the CEDS reports of all Regions include demographic and economic statistics while describing their economic development situation. In some cases, certain of these statistics are alluded to as benchmarks. Prior to this effort, no Region had established and institutionalized an ongoing and consistent benchmarking program as a part of its performance evaluation. Whereas reiteration of accomplishments, rating scales and summations of metrics may provide an indication of performance relative to an economic development strategy, it is a sound and ongoing benchmarking system that brings the economic development process full circle back to the fundamental economic situation of the Region or of the State. The *Consolidated Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy of 2007* called for the development of a consistent bench-marking system of key economic indicators that the Regional Councils could use in the preparation of their regional CEDS and for comparison between regions and the State.

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